

## Getting youth hooked on giving

**MONEY 401** | That's Julie Toskan-Casale's mission, writes columnist *Ellen Roseman*

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[ELLEN ROSEMAN](#)

Julie Toskan-Casale made millions of dollars after selling her company.

Now she's on track to giving away \$1 million through a foundation created with the sale proceeds. Her mission is to connect youth to philanthropy.

At a day-long event this week at Toronto's Winter Garden Theatre, she will be giving out \$385,000 in grants to 77 high schools in Ontario and British Columbia.

The money will be donated, in turn, to social service groups the students have chosen to support in their own communities.

"When I was in business, I loved giving back to the community. I wanted to keep doing it, but in a strategic and focused way," she says.

Toskan-Casale helped start MAC Cosmetics with Frank Toskan (her older brother), Victor Casale (her husband) and Frank Angelo (who died in 1997).

Anxious to expand into international markets, they sold 51 per cent of the company after 10 years to a giant U.S. firm, Estee Lauder Cosmetics Inc.

When Estee Lauder bought the remaining shares, the partners had to find something else to do.

Toskan-Casale was in her mid-30s and had three young children. She didn't want to return to the same fast-paced life.

"When I had Christopher, my oldest child, I had a caesarean section," she says. "But six days later, I was back at MAC filling lipsticks. You had to be there. It was very hands-on."

The company had started a fund to help AIDS victims and do research. It raised \$32 million (U.S.) in the first 10 years.

"I'm really proud of how we engaged everyone," she says about the AIDS campaign. "We had so much fun and we created so much awareness."

She decided to devote herself to philanthropy full-time, setting up the Toskan Foundation in 2001 with her husband and brother. And after taking several courses over the next year, she became the first

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Canadian to graduate from the Rockefeller Foundation's philanthropy workshop.

"That's unusual. Most people set up foundations without such a formal, thoughtful process," says Hilary Pearson, president of Philanthropic Foundations Canada.

The non-profit group has 80 member foundations, including some of the largest ones in Canada. They manage \$4.8 billion in assets and made total grants of \$193 million in 2004.

Setting up a foundation allows you to give grants in a purposeful way. You can use tax-assisted charitable dollars to target emerging needs, such as homelessness, women's health or child poverty.

You need capital of \$1 million or more to set up your own foundation. That's because of the legal, accounting and governance responsibilities that go with it. You also need to think about how and where to spend the money to achieve the greatest good.

"Philanthropy isn't a thing on the corner of your desk that you do in your spare time," Pearson says. "It takes a lot of effort. You have to engage in it."

Toskan-Casale wanted to find a niche. She was looking for a charitable need that wasn't served, something that would benefit from her energy, enthusiasm and expertise.

During her studies, she had to do site visits. An idea came to her while she was at a shantytown outside Buenos Aires, Argentina.

"I discovered that to really feel an issue, you have to be there," she says. "Hands-on involvement is very effective."

She says you don't really understand poverty and destitution in a South American slum until you go there. Nothing brings home the message more than firsthand experience.

The Youth and Philanthropy initiative tries to make students in Grade 9 and 10 more familiar with how charities work.

Students already have to do 40 hours of volunteer work before graduating high school. This is a provincial government requirement. The Toskan Foundation supplements students' volunteer work by providing a more pragmatic look at how charities operate. Each participating high school gets a \$5,000 grant each year to donate to a social service group in its community. Students have to do research, review candidates and make site visits. "As teenagers, they can go to a charity and ask questions. What would they do with a \$5,000 grant from the foundation? This helps build their confidence," Toskan-Casale says.

The program, now in its fourth year, is based on a curriculum prepared by a noted educator and provided free of charge to participating schools.

High school students come up with a list of deserving charities. Then, they defend their choices before a panel of judges.

Students often compete in the high school auditorium, with families and friends cheering them on. The team that makes the best presentation gets the \$5,000 grant.

Here's where some of the money is going:

Students at Earl Haig Collegiate in Toronto are helping the Sunnybrook Veterans Comfort Fund. The money was used to purchase a wheelchair lift for a van used to transport veterans.

York Mills Collegiate students are helping Furniture Bank, which provides gently used items for low-income people furnishing a home. The centre can now stay open four days a week (from three).

Eastdale Collegiate students are helping Touchstone Youth Centre, a shelter for young people at risk of homelessness, to repair water damage in its basement.

Toronto-Dominion Bank is a partner with the Toskan Foundation, providing \$400,000 in funding over the past three years.

"We get involved with a lot of community programs. This attracted us because it was innovative," says Scott Mullin, vice-president of government and community relations for TD Bank Financial Group.

"It has a double whammy. Local charities get support and schoolkids get curious about what's going on in their communities. This opens their eyes and broadens their horizons."

Toskan-Casale is creative in her approach and her passion is infectious, Mullin says.

"She was quite fussy about the kind of partner she wanted. She checked us out as much as we checked her out."

TD was already providing scholarships for high school students who were community leaders.

It gives a \$60,000 stipend to 20 students each year, paying for their tuition while they're at university, and providing jobs in the summer.

"We're looking for kids who have started something, initiated something. There's an obvious link to this program," Mullin says.

Craig Kielburger, founder of Free the Children, is a TD scholarship winner. He and brother Marc will attend Tuesday's awards ceremony at the Winter Garden Theatre.

They work with the Toskan Foundation to deliver the program to high schools through a non-profit group they run, called Leaders Today.

Craig graduates this year with a four-year degree in peace and conflict studies from the University of Toronto.

He won the Moss Scholarship, given to arts and science students who combine high marks and leadership. (Disclosure: I chaired the committee.) He's taking a year off, then going on to study at Oxford University.

By bringing in high-level partners, the program has grown quickly. Toskan-Casale now wants to move to a higher level.

She's signed up 120 high schools for the coming year in Ontario and British Columbia. One day, she hopes to take the program to Britain and the United States.

Just turning 41 this week, she expects to work in philanthropy for the rest of her career.

"After MAC, I didn't know how I could top that experience, what would make me feel as good," she says. "This is it."

Next week, we look at other entrepreneurs who turned to philanthropy as a career.

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*Ellen Roseman's column appears Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday. You can reach her by writing Business c/o Toronto Star, 1 Yonge St., Toronto M5E 1E6; by phone at 416-945-8687; by fax at 416-865-3630; or at [eroseman@thestar.ca](mailto:eroseman@thestar.ca) by email.*

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